

## My Crown 821

### Chapter 821: Curse Practitioner

“Why is this happening?” While continuing with the acupuncture for that miss, the old doctor mumbled to himself as his forehead became drenched in sweat.

The two maidservants were so worried while looking on from the side that tears had started streaming down.

Qiao Mu simply didn't want to butt in. Since the other party had already called over a doctor anyways, the doctor could naturally handle the situation.

With Mo Lian holding her small hand, she walked past the miss that had collapsed on the ground.

Yet all of a sudden, she halted and stared at that miss's glabella, before exclaiming faintly in surprise.

Seeing her stopping, Mo Lian also followed suit. Similarly, Duan Yue glanced at the scene before asking softly, “Qiaoqiao, did you discover something?”

*This wasn't some kind of illness.* There were faintly discernible runes in between that miss's brows.

*What was going on?*

Qiao Mu promptly put up her guard, tugging the hand Mo Lian was holding, as well as pushing Duan Yue backwards. Afterwards, she examined the collapsed miss's body with her chilly eyes.

“Doctor, are you able to cure my miss or not? Look at how much pain she is in.” A maidservant couldn't resist criticizing the sweating old doctor.

“Her pulse is clearly completely normal. This old doctor has never seen this kind of symptom before in all my years of practicing medicine.”

“What completely normal are you talking about? Just earlier, my miss was alright in the carriage, but in the next moment, she clutched her chest and cried in pain. Soon afterwards, she fainted!” The maidservant rebuked in worry and indignation. “Doctor! If you can't figure out the problem, then don't hamper my miss's condition.”

After being momentarily at a loss for words, the old doctor stood up, slightly ill at ease.

“Come, let me take a look.” Qiao Mu suddenly walked up and squatted in front of that miss.

However, when the maidservant turned around and saw that it was a young lady even younger than her own miss, a distrustful gaze promptly came from her eyes. “Who are you? What do you want to do?”

“Xiao'ye.”

“Yes, Little Master.” Cutting to the chase, Xiao'ye brought two people with him to carry those two shrieking maidservants up.

After each person struck out with their palms, the maidservants' necks tilted, fainting noiselessly.

“You, what do you want to do? M-My miss is the third daughter of Assistant Minister Li of the Office of Imperial Banquets. So, so don’t act recklessly.” The carriage driver gazed flabbergasted at Xiao’ye and the rest. When his gaze settled on Mo Lian and Duan Yue, he could perceive that these two youths were even more unordinary.

“Troublesome.” Qiao Mu simply held that Miss Li’s hand, taking her pulse.

Soon after that, she raised her fingers and took out a blue talisman, slapping it on the miss’s bosom.

After runes flashed past Miss Li’s bosom, surging talisman energy poured into her body. It rushed straight for deep within her glabella, dispelling the black talisman seal originally there.

Miss Li immediately whimpered, and her dazed gaze met Qiao Mu’s when she opened her eyes.

“It’s fine now, quickly bring your miss back home.” Qiao Mu stood up and walked away, leaving behind a grateful carriage driver who kept repeating his thanks.

It wasn’t until the three people were a distance away from the carriage that Duan Yue finally couldn’t resist asking curiously, “Qiaoqiao, you used a talisman on her just now? Could it be that this Miss Li wasn’t ill?”

“She was suffering from a forbidden technique, a curse.” Qiao Mu’s small face was tense, her expression grave. “That is a group of people derived from talisman practitioners who will stop at nothing to pursue dark and forbidden talisman techniques.”

It was fortunate that this curse practitioner wasn’t too competent, not to mention that the person had only utilized the simplest illness curse. Hence, she could easily dispel the curse with a protective talisman.

However, Qiao Mu hadn’t expected a curse practitioner to appear in the Mo Kingdom capital.

## **Chapter 822: Reunion**

As its name denoted, curse practitioners roamed through the darkness, stealthily using forbidden curses in order to accomplish their hidden goals.

They were derived from talisman practitioners, and they also had their own inheritance. After the passage of centuries, many secret and forbidden curses had actually long been lost.

Even the most commonly-seen illness curse would also have various effects, depending on the level of the practitioner who drew the talisman.

The illness curse on Miss Li’s body was merely at the beginner-level, so it wasn’t a hassle to dispose of.

However, what Mo Lian and them found strange was the fact that curse practitioners, this population that had vanished for more than a hundred years, had appeared again.

There was completely no sign!

“Let the talisman patrician family investigate and resolve this on their own.” Mo Lian stated dryly, “The talisman patrician family exterminated a batch of curse practitioners three hundred years ago. They’re the ones who are most unwilling to see curse practitioners emerge.”

“The Mu Family will definitely not permit the existence of curse practitioners, since it’ll disrupt the balance of the talisman circle,” Duan Yue also added with a smile.

Qiao Mu wasn’t particularly worried either. Speaking frankly, curse practitioners didn’t have much to do with her.

As long as they weren’t blind enough to offend her, then however they wanted to oppose the talisman patrician family had nothing to do with her!

“Go leak the news to the talisman patrician family.” Mo Lian turned around to instruct Huifeng, and the latter nodded before leaving to handle this matter without a word.

When Qiao Mu got home, she made it in time for dinner, making everyone ecstatic.

These two days, Wei Ziqin had been prattling on about how her child wasn’t back yet, why wasn’t she back yet.

Qiao Zhongbang and Second Uncle Qiao didn’t dare to tell the others about what had happened to Qiao Mu in Beilan City. They had been on tenterhooks for several days, and they were naturally overjoyed when they saw that the little fellow had made it back completely unharmed.

While holding the little monk’s hand, Qiao Mu introduced him to her family, only explaining that he was a little monk that she had picked up during her trip.

This little monk was soft and adorable like a steamed white bun, and Wei Ziqin fell in love at first sight. This made our dear little Qiao Sen vigilant, and he glanced at the little monk repeatedly.

Seeing that she was a bit tired, everyone urged Qiao Mu to go rest after they finished eating dinner.

Since her period had just come for the first time, she had low energy during these few days. So after she returned to her room, she washed up and went to sleep.

As for the little monk, she naturally left it to her mother to make arrangements.

After night fell.

Inside a rundown temple, the sound of Elderly Lady’s struggling cough whilst at death’s door was heard intermittently.

Elderly Lady was curled up on the icy ground in thin clothes. Xu Jiao had even sold her only jacket, so at present, she could only silently endure the cold in tears.

She could never have imagined that she would spend her days like this.

Let alone eating and drinking less, the crucial point was that she, at her age, was being readily hit and scolded by her vicious daughter-in-law.

The patience Xu Jiao had for Elderly Lady ran out on the third day that they had moved into the rundown temple.

She waited for the Qiao Zhongbang couple to come pick up his old mother in vain, and Qiao Zhongheng couldn't find a custodian job either. She had no idea how her family had endured for the past few days, and they were basically at the point where they had to fight with dogs over food.

Adding to that was the fact that Elderly Lady was used to living a pampered lifestyle, so she easily got sick and needed to be waited upon. Xu Jiao's anger rose day by day, and she finally couldn't hold it in anymore, giving Elderly Lady a violent beating.

She got addicted once she started, and she would brutally beat Elderly Lady whenever she felt upset, which was practically every day. Now, hearing Elderly Lady cough without stopping, the anger in Xu Jiao's heart surged again.

After scolding "cursed old b\*tch," Xu Jiao hopped up, picking up the bamboo slab that she habitually used before striking it at Elderly Lady's body.

### **Chapter 823: Dear Relative**

"You d\*mned old woman, what the hell are you coughing for! Can I just pass my days in peace and quiet, ah? I'm gonna beat you old hag to death!"

"Ah, ah, I'm dying, don't beat me, cough cough, you'll beat me to death, ah!" Elderly Lady flopped back and forth on the ground like a dying fish.

"Hey, are you letting us sleep anymore?" Granny Niu sat up irritably and snapped.

Qiao Zhongheng was also foul-mouthed. "Are you finished? After beating her to death, you're going to buy her a coffin?"

Xu Jiao spat in contempt before throwing down the bamboo slab in a clatter. "Death would end all this trouble. It's better than seeing her neither dead nor alive every day."

The families in the other corners were all used to this scene, and they jeered at Xu Jiao in ridicule.

Just as they were about to continue sleeping, they heard the sound of neighing horses from the rundown temple, as well as someone reporting, "Master, this is the place."

A row of torches soon lit up the entrance to the temple, and when the person in the lead, an elderly man in his sixties, saw the old woman whimpering while lying on the ground, he was taken aback.

After someone next to the elderly man whispered into his ear, he immediately understood. He promptly put on a benevolent expression as he walked up to help up the frail and weak Elderly Lady, who was so filthy that the color of her clothes couldn't be discerned. "Sister-in-law, I am your brother Qiao Dongbo, from the main family. Do you still recognize me? We should have met several times some years ago."

Since the corner of Elderly Lady Qiao's mouth had ruptured from being beaten, speaking hurt so much that she shuddered. Hence, she could only gaze pitifully at Qiao Dongbo with her two panda eyes. "Y-You are?"

Yet Qiao Zhongheng and Xu Jiao were the first to react. Immediately revealing covetous gazes, they walked up with bent waists and lowered heads, incessantly speaking pleasantries. "Y-You must be Eldest Uncle from the main family. Goodness, we've finally found a relative!"

Qiao Dongbo suppressed the bit of revulsion in his eyes, and he said to them with a smile, "Correct, correct. You are Zhongheng, right? I am your Eldest Uncle from the main family."

In reality, Qiao Dongbo had long had someone investigate their identities. If it weren't for the fact that he stood to gain something from them, he wouldn't have thought of coming to this rundown temple to meet these country bumpkins.

*This discomposd old lady was the Marquis of Jiayuan's biological mother and the crown prince consort's grandmother!*

A calculating glint flitted past Qiao Dongbo's eyes.

Seeing Qiao Dongbo dressed in presentable clothing, Granny Niu was so impatient that she started drooling. She went up and grabbed onto Xu Jiao, prodding her in a suppressed voice, "Ah Jiao, we've shared trials and tribulations together during these ten days or so. If it weren't for my material assistance, you wouldn't have been able to wait to see these good days. You have to bring our family with you, okay."

When Granny Niu saw Xu Jiao flattening her lips noncommittally, she anxiously stepped in close and squeezed her hand, saying quietly, "After returning to the main family, you'll have an extra helper with another brother with you. My son, and my two grandsons, can all help you take care of matters."

"Right, that's right." Madam née Bo also hastily joined in and brazenly said to Xu Jiao, "Sister Jiao, after interacting for so long, our two families know each other thoroughly. Bringing us along will be good for taking care of various matters in the future, yeah."

The other people inside the rundown temple gazed at them in extreme envy, and they regretted inside that they didn't build good relations with Qiao Zhongheng's family from the start.

Just like a prideful peacock, Xu Jiao stood up straight and looked down on these scum holed up in the corners of the rundown temple.

*Hmph, just wait until she returned to the Qiao Clan's main family and became their third young mistress. She'd definitely not let off Qiao Zhongbang and his family of devils!*

"Achoo." Qiao Mu raised her hand to rub her small nose.

## **Chapter 824: The New Year Festival (1)**

Shaoyao, who was carrying water inside, hastily walked up. "Miss, did you catch a cold?"

"It's nothing." After washing up, she picked up the bowl of hot porridge with both hands, and after drinking it all, she lazily returned to her bed.

When Shaoyao saw this, she couldn't resist laughing. "This morning, Master and Madam both came over to take a look, but they left after seeing that you were sleeping. Madam said to go to the large courtyard for dinner tonight."

Qiao Mu nodded.

Although it was already past lunchtime, she wasn't too hungry after drinking a bowl of porridge, so she dismissed Shaoyao.

Even after taking an afternoon nap and drinking a bowl of sweet soup, the little fellow continued to laze about on the bed to read. When she looked up, she saw Shaoyao holding several invitations and walking in with a weird expression.

"What is it?"

"The madams of the Qin Family, the Mu Family, and the other large patrician families, as well as the several prince consorts, have sent you an invitation, inviting you to admire the plum blossoms, the bamboo, and the scenery..."

"Oh." The little fellow flipped over a page with a twirl of her fingertip.

*Just an "oh?"* Shaoyao twitched her mouth. "Cough, this servant acted on my own and declined the invitation on your behalf. However, the eldest prince consort said that she would come tomorrow personally for a visit. I suppose that she insists on inviting you to the plum blossom banquet."

"No time." The little fellow didn't even feel like lifting her head.

"Miss, what are you busy with these two days?" Shaoyao asked honestly. "Do you want this humble one to help you?"

"There's nothing much to be busy with. Sleeping and reading, I guess. Too lazy to go out." Setting down the book in her hands, Qiao Mu looked at the sunlight streaming in from outside the window. She squinted her bright eyes and flipped off the bed in an extremely good mood. "Come, let's take a stroll through the garden."

Shaoyao smiled brightly, and she said while following the little fellow out the door, "Miss, will you enter the palace on New Year's Eve? According to convention, Her Majesty the Queen will summon the prince consorts and commandery princesses, as well as madams with mandates and patrician families' daughters, to the palace so as to wrap dumplings for a mere formality."

Of course, the young misses didn't actually need to do the work, and they only went through the motions.

"Not going." Darling Qiao rejected without thinking about it. "This year, I'm going nowhere, just staying at home to accompany my mom in seeing in the new year."

Shaoyao sighed, saying with a smile, "Madam will be ecstatic."

"Mhm, add dishes to everyone's New Year's Eve meal. Make sure to distribute more tasty goodies."

"Alright!" Shaoyao responded happily.

On the day of New Year's Eve, the madams and young misses were assembled together inside the queen's Brilliant Sun Hall, their continuous happy laughter and cheerful voices filling up the space.

With the New Year's festive atmosphere washing away some of her melancholy, Queen Zhao sat in the chief seat in great spirits, smiling at the crowd of noble ladies and misses.

Although they were supposedly wrapping dumplings, it was just as Shaoyao had said. They merely went through the motions as a formality. The madams and misses didn't need to do anything, and it was the maidservants next to them who fiddled with the ready-made dumpling skins and dumpling filling from the kitchen.

"Noble Consort Zheng is here." With this announcement, everyone set down the things they were holding, standing up to make their salutations.

With her personal royal maid Cailing supporting her, Noble Consort Zheng sauntered in slowly, appearing stately while dressed in a wide satin robe .

"Greetings to Noble Consort Zheng." Everyone curtsied together.

Noble Consort Zheng stroked the hair by her temples and smiled. "Everyone be at ease."

Afterwards, Noble Consort Zheng walked up to the queen with Cailing's assistance. She gave a slight curtsy and said with a smile, "This noble consort greets Your Majesty the Queen. This noble consort's body has been feeling a bit heavy these two days, thus waking up late. Please forgive me, Older Sister."

The queen eyed her icily, her gaze seemingly sweeping across her flat belly, before curving her lips up in a sneer. "Since Younger Sister's body feels heavy, there's no need for so many formalities. Have a seat."

"Thank you, Your Majesty." After sitting down alluringly, Noble Consort Zheng's gaze swept across the crowd and asked in feigned surprise, "Eh, where is the crown prince consort?"

## **Chapter 825: The New Year Festival (2)**

Queen Zhao instantly became enraged. Noble Consort Zheng was simply rubbing her nose into it.

Previously, her son had come to tell her this, that this stoic face wasn't going to enter the palace on New Year's Eve. She was only going to enter the palace on New Year's Day to give her wishes to the king and queen, as well as participate in the New Year's feast.

According to the convention of previous years, all the prince consorts, princesses, commandery princesses, noble ladies, and noble misses, had to enter the palace and join the New Year's Eve activity as a formality, yet her own daughter-in-law said that she wasn't coming, just like that. When all was said and done, this made her lose some face.

She had only felt better after Huaxuan consoled her again early this morning, yet Consort Zheng, this b\*tch, stabbed Her Majesty the Queen's angsty heart with one sentence!

Noble Consort Zheng chuckled while covering her lips. "This noble consort has heard that the eldest prince consort had personally paid a visit to invite the crown prince consort to her plum blossom banquet but was barred outside the door."

Subsequently, everyone's gazes shifted to the eldest prince consort Shu Quan, who was sitting in the first seat in the second row on the left.

Shu Quan stood up naturally without restraint, performing a curtsy towards the queen before doing the same for the noble consort. With the bearing of a miss from a prominent family, she said evenly, "It was Quan'er who was rude and impetuous. Quan'er did not get barred outside the door. The Marchioness of

Jiayuan personally welcomed Quan'er, relaying that the crown prince consort has felt unwell ever since returning to the capital."

Queen Zhao's expression eased up slightly, and she said with a nod, "This queen has also heard. This queen still hasn't congratulated Consort Cheng for picking a new daughter-in-law."

A middle-aged consort sitting below Noble Consort Zheng also said with a smile, "It's all thanks to Your Majesty's magnificent grace. The estate plans to welcome Li Xiu'e after the New Year Festival."

Queen Zhao's expression was indescribable.

Consort Cheng's Mo Jiao married one pretty concubine after another, yet why did her own outstanding son seem as if he were bewitched by the little stoic? In his eyes, there was no one other than that little stoic.

"The queen dowager probably can't make it back for this New Year's Festival. She's still recuperating at Ziyu Mountain Villa." Queen Zhao said with a smile, "Tomorrow's noon banquet will be held in this queen's Brilliant Sun Hall."

Early tomorrow morning, the king would summon all the civil and military officials to hold a grand ceremony, after which would be the New Year's feast. At that time, there would be another round of bestowals and gifts.

Seeing that the queen diverted the conversation, refusing to keep discussing that unruly crown prince consort with her, she involuntarily harrumphed and thought: *I don't believe you, née Zhao, are that fond of that stoic face daughter-in-law!*

Queen Zhao's momentary change in expression just now could already very much demonstrate a problem.

*Since née Zhao was nursing a grievance toward that little stoic, then she naturally had to make good use of this.* Noble Consort Zheng curved her lips. Whenever she thought about how she previously got trounced by the little stoic, she would feel resentful, unable to rest or eat in peace.

The crowd of noble ladies and young misses below were already animatedly starting to discuss the clothes and makeup they ought to wear to tomorrow's New Year's feast.

Meanwhile, even though Queen Zhao found herself in the most distinguished seat in the main hall, her heart felt exceptionally lonely. She felt as if there were a layer of gauze separating her from those madams and misses' continuously chattering voices. They were seemingly indistinct to her ears.

On the other hand, the entire Qiao Family was greatly rejoicing in their estate.

Everyone had crowded inside the spacious sitting room. The adults were busy wrapping dumplings, while the children were fooling around while kneading the flour.

The Qiao Family had given all the servants a vacation, letting them return home for their family reunions. They could return tomorrow noon.

The remaining few servants without families had all been called over to help as assistants.

The loyal old servants, Chang Zai, Old Bai, and Mother Xu, had long been familiar with the way their masters celebrated the new year.

### **Chapter 826: The New Year Festival (3)**

However, the new servants were all incomparably shocked.

The master had just said that today, they weren't master and servant. Everyone present was family, working together to cook a reunion dinner.

Dongmei didn't know how many years it had been since she had eaten a full meal.

She was an orphan, so she had experienced the fickleness of human nature, as well as the dolefulness of the world. She had struggled to survive this entire time, up until being sent here by the middleman not long ago, luckily being picked by Sister Chunying.

Ever since entering the Qiao Estate for work, she didn't need to worry about going hungry or suffering from the cold again.

A few days ago, she received the two distributed suits of winter clothing, as well as a brand-new jacket. At that time, tears streamed down her face, and she quietly told herself that she had to work hard. Such a good employer was hard to come by, so she would truly be a fool if she didn't appreciate her good fortune.

To her astonishment, today, on New Year's Eve, Master and Madam had all the servants who didn't go home come sit down together for a reunion dinner. This once again refreshed her perception of her masters.

"Stop playing already!" Wei Ziqin gently patted her younger daughter's hand, and she smiled with closed lips while saying, "Look at your sister! What kind of thing have you wrapped?"

Qiao Lin grumbled with puffed cheeks, "Mom, you only just know how to say 'Sister this, Sister that.' Look at this dumpling that Sister wrapped. It's so repulsive and hideous! How is it prettier than this one I made!"

It was rare for Qiao Mu to be a bit embarrassed. *She must say, her culinary talent was very ordinary...*

"You lass!" Wei Ziqin raised her hand to swat her younger daughter, but Qiao Lin hightailed it in a flash while also scattering a handful of flour onto her brother Qiao Sen's small face.

Suffering this unexpected calamity, Qiao Sen simply gazed in stupefaction at his sister.

Beside him, the little monk, whose face looked like a steamed white bun, started chuckling. He clapped his palms together, just about to murmur "My Buddha," but he had freaking flicked his entire face with flour. Even his nose and small mouth were dusted white.

When Qiao Lin saw this upon turning around, she started guffawing out loud.

"His Highness the Crown Prince has come, His Highness the Crown Prince has come," Chang Zai excitedly ran in and yelled.

The whole family hastily patted off the flour on their bodies and hands. Just as they were about to turn around to welcome Mo Lian, he strode in with a smile and called out in a clear, loud voice, "Dad, Mom, Qiaoqiao, I've come."

Wei Ziqin was beaming so widely that her eyes became slits.

Duan Yue, who trailed in after him, couldn't help harrumphing and pursing his lips, before barrelling forward like a loose cannon. "Auntie, I've also come. Today, I came here especially to scrounge a free meal."

"Aiyo, you child, what scrounging are you talking about? If you want, you can come here every day to eat." Wei Ziqin was grinning from ear to ear.

How could Mo Lian stay unperturbed after hearing this? He hastily ran up to his mother-in-law to smear, "Mom, you have to charge him for food expenses."

"Shoo shoo shoo, Auntie isn't as narrow-minded as you." Duan Yue rebutted with a grin.

Meanwhile, Qiao Mu curved her lips before she walked up to Mo Lian while holding a pudgy dumpling that she had wrapped, stuffing it into his hands. "I wrapped it."

"Qiaoqiao, the dumpling you wrapped looks so nice! I can eat 30 of the ones you wrapped in one go!"

*You'll stuff yourself to the point of bursting!* Duan Yue rolled his eyes speechlessly, and then he also said, "I can also eat 30 of them."

Qiao Zhongbang let out a hearty laugh. "Sure! Then let's pick up the pace and wrap some more dumplings."

"You're not returning to the palace today?" Qiao Mu tugged at Mo Lian's sleeve and asked him softly.

Mo Lian's phoenix eyes curved, and he smiled at her while replying, "I'm accompanying you to see in the new year. It'll be fine to return before 5 o'clock in the morning."

At that time, the king was going to scrupulously hold the grand first writing ceremony. All the civil and military officials had to attend, presenting their memorials to the king to extend their respects. This was basically a formality in which they sang the king's praises.

### **Chapter 827: Seeing In the New Year**

With the addition of Mo Lian and Duan Yue, the family reunion became even more lively.

After they finished boiling all the dumplings in a boisterous racket, Qiao Mu then took out sumptuous dishes from her food box.

Two tables were set up in the sitting room, and the entire family, without distinguishing between master and servant, ate a reunion dinner together joyously and harmoniously.

Wei Ziqin took out small embroidered pouches, distributing them to the group of servants who were beaming with happiness, as well as passing out various trinkets and gold ingots to the children.

She gave the children toys to play with, while the servants got 10 pieces of low-grade mystic currency with which they could purchase items. This mystic currency was the newest circulating currency that the royal court had just issued.

Since it was forged from magnetite, it naturally mirrored magnetite in its division of low-grade, mid-grade, high-grade, and supreme-grade mystic currency. Supposedly, this mystic currency wasn't only accepted in Mo Kingdom but was also circulating through the other northern kingdoms. After using this mystic currency to register in advance at the various large and small fortifications, that person could purchase the items inside the food store and fabrics store the next day.

Dongmei gripped her embroidered pouch tightly. She only felt that every one of her masters were good people, and that she had something to strive for now.

While sitting on top of the roof eaves, Qiao Mu held a cup of hot tea as she looked up at the distant, bright moon.

During this time in previous years, she would accompany the old sect master, her master, and her aunt-masters on top of the snowy peaks. They would admire the bamboo and drink tea, silently awaiting the arrival of a new year.

Perhaps these kinds of days wouldn't ever come back.

"Qiaoqiao, you're missing your sect?" Mo Lian's warm and large hand gently grasped her soft and small hand.

When Qiao Mu looked up, she saw the man's pair of phoenix eyes were suffused with ripples under the moonlight.

"With Qiaoqiao here, the sect won't vanish." Mo Lian reached out to squeeze her small chin, and he pointed down below. "Look at how happy Dad and Mom are today."

Qiao Mu looked down, and she saw the two foodies, Qiao Lin and Qiao Sen, carrying a large fruit box as they cheerfully chomped down on the multicolored fruits.

On the other hand, Qiao Hu had collapsed on the side. It was probably because he had stuffed himself too much, since he was massaging his belly with his hand.

Shaoyao was stifling her laughter as she carried over a bowl of soup that aided digestion. Brother Xiao Hu quickly scrambled up as he smiled foolishly at Shaoyao in complete embarrassment.

Duan Yue was currently accompanying Dad, Mom, and Second Uncle in playing mahjong.

When she looked over, she just happened to see her mother grinning from ear to ear. "Oh my, Duan Yue, have you been losing to Auntie deliberately! Auntie won again."

"Auntie, you're marvellously lucky at picking tiles tonight!"

Qiao Zhongbang harrumphed in feigned anger. "How could her luck not be good? She even has the Buddha blessing her, so could her luck even be bad?"

The little monk was sitting cross-legged on a soft cushion at her mother's feet. He was holding a hollow wooden fish to beat the time as he chanted his scriptures.

Yet Second Uncle Qiao twitched his mouth and exclaimed in both amusement and exasperation. "Little Venerable Master, could you stop beating! Which monastery does their morning recitation all the way till this hour?"

*This hilarious kid wasn't diligent in the morning, waiting until the night to do things at the last minute...*

"That is not so." As the little monk beat the wooden fish, he replied to Second Uncle Qiao in a murmur. "This young monk is doing tomorrow's morning recitation."

Second Uncle Qiao gazed at him speechlessly. "Why are you doing tomorrow's morning recitation right now?"

Duan Yue cracked up. "Does it even need to be said? It's certainly because he won't be able to wake up tomorrow morning!"

The little monk hung his small head in slight shame, but he still continued with his rhythmic beating, throwing everyone's laughter out of his mind.

Qiao Mu was feeling a bit sleepy, yet the sound of firecrackers and drums instantly woke her up with a start.

After her view came into focus, she saw that she had drowsily fallen into Mo Lian's arms when she was nodding off earlier.

### **Chapter 828: Bring You to Eat Meat**

The little monk had already finished the morning recitation for tomorrow morning, so he went to frolic with Qiao Sen, who had run up to tug at Duan Yue's robe, insisting that he go set off firecrackers.

Unable to change the children's minds, Duan Yue soon got towed out the door by them.

After floating down from the roof eaves while carrying Qiao Mu, Mo Lian also followed them out.

In the pitch-black night, the single point of light from the firecracker abruptly shot out, breaking the silence in this area with a flashy bang.

Qiao Mu was a bit drowsy. Afterwards, she just fell asleep in a daze, not even knowing when Mo Lian had carried her back to her room.

She didn't really sleep well during the night because of the racket caused by the firecrackers.

However, all the madams with mandates and noble misses had to enter the palace before 7 o'clock in the morning to pay Her Majesty the Queen a New Year call. She hadn't gone to the palace yesterday already, so she naturally couldn't challenge Queen Zhao's dignity again today.

After washing up, Qiao Mu changed into a crimson red dress and draped a fire fox-fur cape of the same color over her shoulders.

At this time, the sky was still dimly lit, so Shaoyao walked in front, carrying a lantern to light up the path. Qiao Mu travelled to her mother's courtyard on foot, and when she arrived at the main room, she coincidentally met Xiao Lin'er.

"Sister, Happy New Year, now give me New Year's money." Qiao Lin was dressed in a pink, lined jacket and wrapped up with a sapphire blue felt cloak on the outside. She hurriedly ran up to hug Qiao Mu's arm with a cheeky grin.

"You're looking for a beating, always asking your sister for things with outstretched hands." Wei Ziqin chided with a smile. She had just so happened to walk out and see Qiao Mu stuffing an embroidered pouch into her younger daughter's hands.

Qiao Lin stuck out her tongue before shrinking her neck back and hiding behind Qiao Mu. She then raised her hand, showing off the small embroidered pouch with a shake. "Sister gave me it. Later, I'll have to have Brother-in-Law give me one too, to collect a pair. Tee-hee."

Seeing Xiao Lin'er stick out her tongue, Wei Ziqin gazed at this daughter with a headache, and she raised her hand to swat her again.

"Look at how naughty she's being. Today when we enter the palace, you must not attract trouble for your sister."

"Mom, what trouble can I attract?" Qiao Lin swayed her head and protested, "I'm so well-behaved."

Just as they were speaking, Qiao Zhongbang walked out while holding his youngest son Qiao Sen's hand, and he said with a smile, "Are you girls ready yet? We have to set out now."

"We were long ready, Dad. Just waiting for you," Qiao Lin replied.

"Then let's go." Yet just as Qiao Zhongbang said this, a small smooth head popped out from beside the door.

The little monk peered at Qiao Mu with pitiful eyes. "Benefactress, where are you running away to now?"

Qiao Mu glanced at him before beckoning with her hand. "Bringing you to eat meat."

At these words, the little monk immediately shook his head like a rattle-drum. "Not eating, not eating! This young monk is determined to not eat meat."

Wei Ziqin furtively tugged at Qiao Mu's sleeve and asked in a low voice, "Qiaoqiao, you're planning on bringing Kongkong into the palace?"

"Mhm." Qiao Mu nodded and explained, "Today's New Year's feast will be separated into two banquet sessions, so we'll be coming back very late."

It was too pitiful to leave the little monk alone at home.

Wei Ziqin concurred once she thought about it. She, too, couldn't bear to leave the child at home, but she also indistinctly felt worried in her heart.

"Would Her Majesty not like it?"

Qiao Mu stated icily, "What does it matter to me whether other people like it or not?"

Wei Ziqin was struck speechless.

This daughter of hers had an icy countenance all day long, so people who didn't understand her would definitely think that she wasn't easy to get close to.

After the family boarded the marquis's estate's carriage, they headed for Huabei Gate. Today, the New Year's feast invited fifth-rank officials and above, as well as their family members.

Naturally, since they didn't head out too early, they expected there to be a bit more traffic at this time.

### **Chapter 829: Crash Right Back at Them**

Surely enough, the official road had already started to be a bit congested before they could pass through Huabei Gate. One carriage trailed after another, unable to see its end.

The carriage driver, Hei'zi, was a lad in his early twenties. He was Qiao Zhongbang's assistant, and he was very deft in speaking and handling affairs.

Hei'zi had excellent driving skills, and the carriage advanced steadily. Along the way, the family was happily chatting away, occasionally carrying the little monk over and teasing him.

The little monk put his palms together devoutly and murmured to himself continuously.

"Kongkong, how many years have you been a monk for?" Qiao Lin was deliberately teasing the little monk into speaking by scratching his small head.

The little monk glanced at her in puzzlement. He blinked his eyes before starting to count off his fingers. "One-two-three-four, Kongkong has entered the monastery for four years already. Benefactress's Sister, what are you asking this for?"

Qiao Mu couldn't resist twitching her mouth upon hearing this form of address, and her dad Qiao Zhongbang also did the same. Ever since this child came to their home, his forms of address were particularly unusual.

Such as Benefactress's Dad, Benefactress's Mom...

Qiao Mu reached out to carry the little monk. "Call me Sister. Do you still want to eat meat?"

"No no no."

"Veggie?"

The little monk hesitated. "It's fine if I miss a meal."

Afterwards, Qiao Mu motioned with her finger, pulling out a fresh and juicy peach from her inner world. "Call me Sister."

"Sister." The little monk immediately reached out to take the peach.

Qiao Lin cracked up in laughter.

“Master, Madam, Young Master, Young Miss, please sit tight.” Hei’zi’s anxious voice suddenly came from outside.

With a bang, they felt the carriage jolting violently.

It was fortunate that this carriage was sturdy enough, so it didn’t fall apart even after suffering an actual collision.

“Peach!” The little monk cried in alarm, as the peach had nearly flown out of his hands.

“What’s going on.” Qiao Mu questioned icily.

Hei’zi’s flustered voice travelled inside. “What kind of carriage driver are you? Why did you forcibly collide into someone else’s carriage! Ah—”

*Crack.* A whip lash rang out.

Hearing the commotion, Qiao Mu abruptly lifted the curtain. “Hei’zi.”

Hei’zi straightened his back from bending over, and he hastily responded, “Miss, Hei’zi is fine.”

“What person dares to obstruct our State Duke of Qing’s Estate? Hurry and get out of the way! Our lord has said that for those who don’t understand hierarchal etiquette and don’t make way, he doesn’t care at all whether they be injured or be beaten to death.” The wicked servant who was driving the carriage started making a hullabaloo before letting Hei’zi speak.

Hei’zi was enraged, and he exclaimed indignantly, “It was clearly you people who were cutting in from behind us, yet you still say such completely unreasonable things!”

Besides, since they had yet to reach Huabei Gate, the road was still quite spacious. You could pass the carriage if you’d like, but if you crashed straight into it, no one would believe it if you said it wasn’t on purpose.

“Hei’zi.” Qiao Mu’s icy eyes looked at that other carriage’s wicked servant.

“Hei’zi is present.”

“Crash right back at them! I don’t care at all whether they be injured or be crashed to death. You just go ahead and crash! If anything happens, there’s me, your miss, who will shoulder the responsibility.” After Qiao Mu gave the order, Hei’zi naturally complied. He lashed his whip, and their carriage charged straight at the State Duke of Qing’s Estate’s carriage.

*Bang!* The State Duke of Qing’s Estate’s horse whinnied in alarm, even raising its hooves.

“Continue!” Qiao Mu had already set up a defensive boundary, enveloping her entire family within to shield them from all the jolting.

Hei’zi was also charged with zeal, and upon hearing his miss’s command, he immediately continued controlling their carriage, crashing into the State Duke of Qing’s Estate’s carriage three times in a row.

Hei'zi's carriage driving skills were so much better than that wicked servant's. Because the wicked servant had inadequate strength, he was unable to immediately regain control of the carriage. Hence, Hei'zi was able to brutally crash into his carriage again and again...

### **Chapter 830: Seeking Death on the First Day of the New Year?**

It had to be known that ever since experiencing the incident of their carriage turning into a convertible cart, Second Uncle Qiao attached particular importance to safety when building their family's carriages. Hence, the materials used in their carriages were all of the highest-quality.

Therefore, how could the State Duke of Qing's Estate's carriage beat the Qiao Estate's at crashing?

All of a sudden, the State Duke of Qing's Estate's carriage flipped over on its side with a banging crash.

A human figure promptly scurried out of the carriage at an extreme speed, while all the items inside jolted out, with scalding hot tea spilling all over the ground.

"An audacious d\*mned servant." A stern shout rang out, accompanied by a powerful sword energy that struck towards Hei'zi with the might of a thunderbolt.

If this strike reached its target, then Hei'zi was sure to die on the spot!

Qiao Mu swept out a wave of mystic energy that directly blasted back the other party's sword energy.

How could the other person dare receive it?

He only felt a vast and mighty mystic energy coming to hit him in the face, as if it would rip him to shreds in the next second.

At the very last second, an elderly man suddenly appeared and struck out a wave of mystic energy to meet it.

The two waves of mystic energy released a huge boom as they collided in mid-air, scaring the passing carriages into halting their advance.

The elderly man felt his right hand numbing from the mystic aftershock, and his eyes were overwhelmed with amazement.

When he looked over, he saw that the other carriage had halted, and a red-clothed young girl alighted from it, her chilly gaze impassively landing on them.

*She was so young, yet her mystic energy cultivation was already above his?* The elderly man found it a bit incredulous.

"How abominable." The man who had attacked first was in his early twenties. His face was very pale, almost as if he were anemic, and a trace of gloominess drifted about his gaze.

At this moment, he was in a bit of a sorry state, since the mystic energy had already torn his large black cloak to complete shreds, revealing his gray robe underneath.

"You wh\*remongering b\*tch, you actually dare..."

*Slap!* Before he could finish, a heavy slap landed on his face from a distance.

This slap also contained mystic energy, so it made Shi Guangjin's cheek swell up at once.

"Ow." Shi Guangjin was slapped stupid from getting caught off guard.

That elderly man hastily rushed over, pulling Shi Guangjin behind him. "Third Young Master."

Shi Guangjin's complexion turned extremely unsightly at once, and his malicious eyes locked onto Qiao Mu, seemingly wanting to devour her raw.

"Crown Prince Consort." Lightning darted behind her and informed in a low voice, "This person is Shi Guangjin, the third son of State Duke of Qing."

"Dispose of him." As soon as Qiao Mu finished speaking this icily, she turned around and boarded the carriage, not even disdaining to spare Shi Guangjin a look from the corner of her eye.

Lightning grabbed towards Shi Guangjin's neck without a hint of hesitation.

Provoking their savage crown prince consort on the first day of the new year really was a case of carrying a lantern to seek one's own death. This was especially when that person was intending to knock over the marquis's estate's carriage, which had directly touched the dragon's reverse scale[1].

"Will this brave man please show mercy."

Lightning didn't care to listen to his pleading, and with a whistle, two more hidden guards appeared beside him, blocking the mystic energy that the elderly man flung out.

Immediately afterwards, Lightning unsheathed his cold sword and truly thrust it towards Shi Guangjin's chest.

"Who dares to cause trouble outside Huabei Gate? Fighting is prohibited in front of Huabei Gate!" After being informed that there were actually people picking a fight outside Huabei Gate, the commander of the royal guard, Hui Feng, hastily bolted over with a team.

When he distantly saw the sword in Lightning's hand thrusting towards someone's chest, Hui Feng felt his brain go numb, and he interfered without thinking.

"Commander Hui, you've come just in time! Quickly save me!" Shi Guangjin released a sigh of relief, hiding behind Hui Feng as if he had grasped onto a life-saving straw.